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# 116  
Filed March 1824  
W. E. Homer  
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Dissertation  
on the

Nature, History, and Treatment  
of Dysentery;  
by Daniel "High."  
of Pennsylvania.

Copy sent me  
to R. H. Brown  
Lancaster

Diagnosis

on the

Victory of the day and the night

of the day

of the night

of the day

## An Inaugural Essay.

In complying with the laws and regulations of this University, which obliges the candidate to write a Dissertation on some Medical Subject. I beg leave to offer, though, with much diffidence, a few remarks on the Nature, History, and Treatment of Dysentery.

As this disease, owing to its mortality and universal prevalence, has claimed the attention of Medical men, from the earliest ages, it cannot be expected that one, who acknowledges himself a Tyro, in science, and in letters, should advance any thing new,



profounds, or highly polished upon it; a plain and simple statement of what I have acquired during a limited course of reading, and the usual attendance on medical lectures, is all that must be looked for, as yet. but little has been acquired either by observation or experience.

### History of Dysentery.

Dysentery is a disease of warm rather than cold countries, and occurs in the latter end of summer or autumnal months, at the same time with Intermittent, or Remittent Bilious Fevers.

It is a disease claiming particular attention from military Physicians.

importance in every political system is  
to obtain and maintain the  
highest and most efficient means of  
conducting the business of the nation  
and to secure a permanent and  
lasting peace and stability in the  
world. It is the duty of every  
citizen to support the government  
and to obey the laws of the land.

### History of the Republic

The Republic is a system of government  
in which the power is vested in the  
people and their representatives. It is  
the only form of government which  
is based on the principles of justice  
and equality. The Republic is the  
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and equality. The Republic is the  
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and equality.

as when exposed to rain during the autumnal months, or compelled to encamp, or to carry on their operations in low and marshy countries, are extremely liable to be attacked with this scourge of Armies, and often, during such campaigns, more men perish from this one cause than by the sword.

### Symptoms of Dysentery,

Dysentery is a disease generally characterized by frequent mucous discharges, sometimes tinged with blood, at other times not. In the latter case constituting the Dysenteria alba of Doctor Rhoderer. It is also attended with much griping and tenesmus, fruitless attempts at stool and in the





indulgence of them little being voided and that of an unnatural appearance; The excrementitious matter commonly consists of mucous mixed with blood, and at times of thin serous matter or fragments of a membranous appearance, consisting of coagulable lymph. These have been erroneously, to be abrasions of the villous coat of the intestines.

When natural feces do occur, they are in the form of Scybala, of a hard texture and rounded shape, corresponding with the cells of the Colon in which they <sup>have</sup> probably lain, since the commencement of the disease:

Dysentery is often ushered in by a Diarrhoea, though at times, obstinate



constipation marks the approach of the disease several days previous to its commencement, attended with flatulence and considerable disorder of the Stomach: But in whatever way it makes its first appearance it now puts on its characteristic symptoms; at times in the commencement a pure and unmixed blood is voided in considerable quantities;

Streaks of blood with the faecal discharges, denote opening of small vessels at the extremity of the Rectum; The stools at the commencement have a faint smell, but should mortification ensue the foetor is intolerable;

Dysentery is generally complicated with fever, and these put

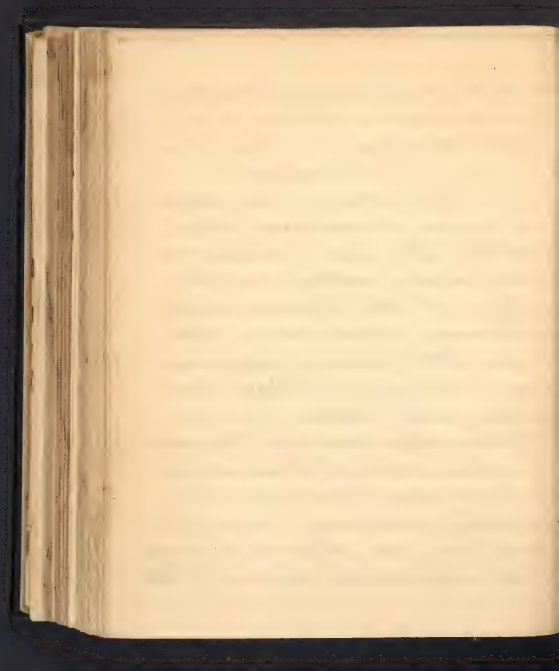


on different types being Intermittent  
Remittent, and sometimes of a  
Typhus character.

### Termination.

The Terminations of this disease  
are various. it sometimes ceases  
gradually after proper treatment, the  
stools becoming natural, and the  
gripping with the Tenesmus entirely  
disappearing. In other cases the  
disease often continuing for some  
time ends in a Diarrhoea, accom-  
panied with Enteric symptoms;

This complaint sometimes terminates  
in a severe attack of Rheumatism,  
as if it were thrown upon the  
extremities, and owing to this cause,  
some have gone so far as to con-  
sider it a Rheumatic affection of the



bowels; Our prognosis in this disease should be extremely guarded, as apparently desperate cases at times recover.

We may consider the patient in danger when the first Puke and Purge does not relieve him.

The symptoms with the fever continuing to increase, <sup>the pulse continuing and intermitting</sup> the Countenance much changed, the patient restless, without complaining of Griping, also, cases attended with little or no discharge from the bowels; Here inflammation probably transcends the secretory point, these appear to be of the nature of Colic. the pain being similar, and generally terminates fatally. In the low and advanced stages, Riccough if obstinate denotes mortification;



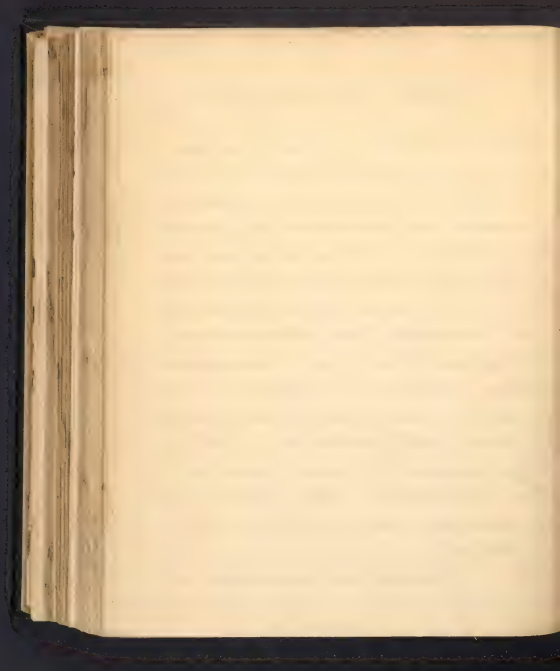


## Causes of Dysentery.

The causes of dysentery are crude, indigestible, and acid matter taken into the Stomach. The ordinary causes of malarial or Intermitent fevers, sensible qualities of the atmosphere, as sudden transitions from Heat, to Cold, or from dryness to humidity;

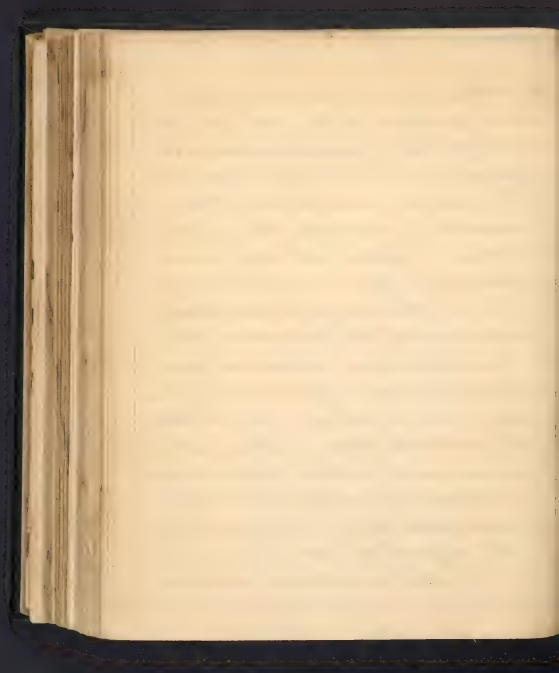
It alternates with Rheumatism, and appear to be of a Rheumatic nature. It may be considered as a disease originating from Marsh Effluvia, and peculiarities of the atmosphere. We must infer from this, its seat in the stomach finally extending itself to the Great Intestines.

The actual condition of



the above parts produced by the above causes, and upon which most of the symptoms depend, appears to be, an inflammatory state of the mucous coat lining the *Prima via*, especially, the great intestines, together with this and probably in great measure caused by it, there is a preternatural constriction of the muscular fibres of the intestines. Those two circumstances are sufficient to explain many of the symptoms: The retention of the natural feces in the Colon will account for the non-appearance of natural excrements, and the inflamed state of the lining membrane for the effusion of serum.

We accordingly find upon



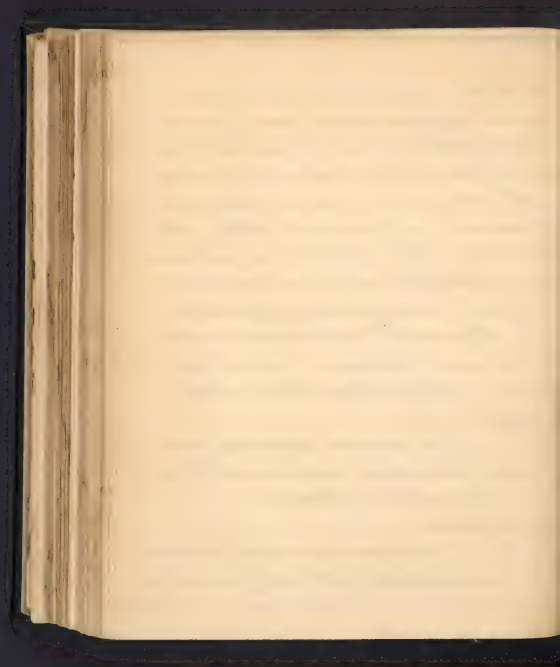
dissection when there is not too much disorganization from Gangrene. constrictions of the Colon, and the consequence of violent inflammation may always be detected, such as thickening of the coats of the intestines, ulcerations of the Colon and Rectum, though the latter is by no means a necessary consequence of Dysentery;

A pustular appearance of the colon and Rectum is sometimes found, which extends their whole length.

The small intestines are seldom found in a diseased state, but are much inflamed.

### Diagnosis.

Dysentery resembles Diarrhoea in some respects, but may be distin-



= quished from it by the Tenesmus  
and the smallness of the evacuations,  
though the latter symptom, often  
attends Diarrhoea especially of ad-  
vanced age, also by the discharge  
of blood which does not occur in  
Diarrhoea;

The fever in Dysentery also  
serves as a distinguishing mark,  
The two diseases sometimes run  
into each other.

From Colic, it may  
be distinguished by the constipation  
and acuteness of the pain attending  
the former, and also by the presence  
of Tenesmus in the former:

Treatment of Dysentery,  
Dysentery may be considered as  
a disease in which the efforts of

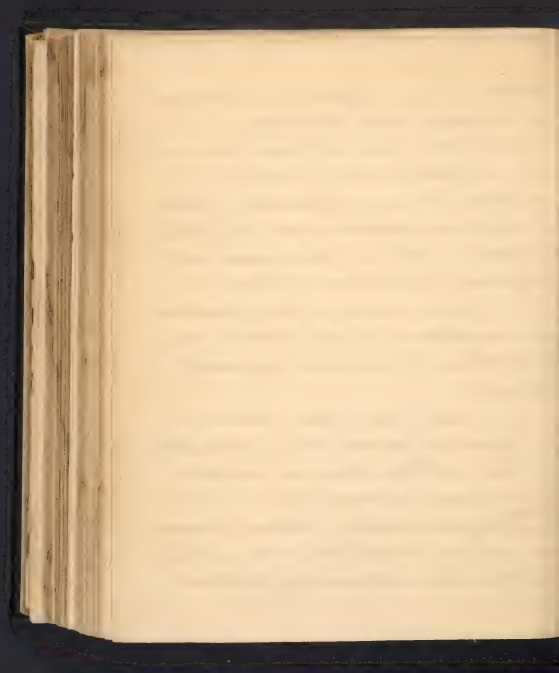




Measure towards effecting a cure are  
for the most part abortive,

But if the view I have taken of  
the disease be correct that is I  
consider it an inflammatory affection  
of the lower bowels especially of their  
internal coats, accompanied with  
stricture of the Colon which is to  
be considered in a great measure  
as an effect of the inflammation. The  
indications of cure are sufficiently  
obvious.

Our first object should be  
to lessen or remove the inflammation,  
together with the morbid irritation  
and spasms attending it; and for  
effecting this purpose nothing seems to answer  
so well as venesection, and in strong  
Habits where inflammatory symptoms



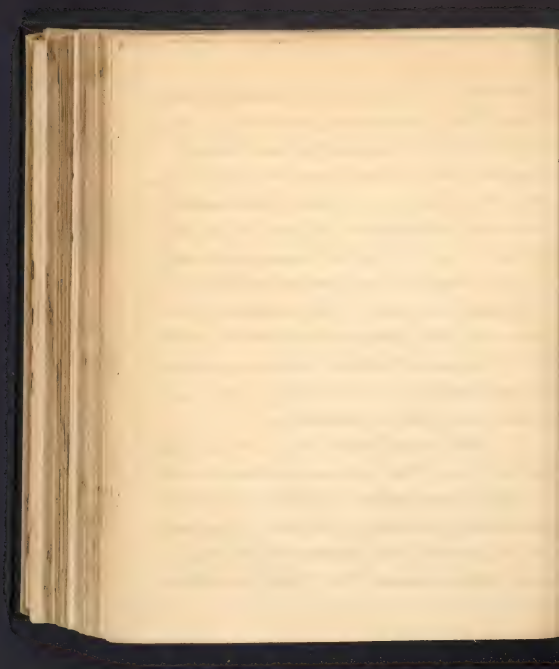
run high: blood in considerable quantities should be drawn; the operation being repeated as often as the state of the system demands it. But during some seasons when the system seems disposed to fall into the Typhoid condition, caution in the use of blood-letting becomes necessary; but generally in our Climate it is called for as a prelude to the rest of the Treatment; and in the words of a worthy and distinguished Professor excels all other means in awakening susceptibility to remedial impressions.

We next nauseate and attempt to vomit. when there is a collection of bile resort to Emetics and this is particularly necessary in the



Dysentery arising in Miasmatic Coun=  
tries. The Tartarised Antimony, app=  
=pears to be the best Vomit, but  
should a milder one be required  
we may resort to the Ipecacuanha,  
but the principal object to be ob=  
=tained in a recent case of Dysentery,  
is an ample evacuation of the In=  
=testinal Canal. The morbid secre=  
=tion into the bowels together with  
the morbid matters already there,  
no doubt have a tendency, to in=  
=crease all the symptoms.

The indication now to be full=  
=filled are the removing these with  
as little irritation to the inflamed  
parts as possible, for this purpose  
we resort to the milder Cathartics,  
and to succeed the Emetic, nothing



appears to be preferable to the Castor  
oil: Glauber Salts or Epsom salts  
given in solution with Emetic  
Tartar, will be found extremely  
serviceable. This generally causes  
a copious evacuation, at times, how-  
ever, the bowels will not be acted  
upon by the above articles, here  
we resort to an infusion of  
Senna holding Glauber salts in  
solution.

In cases arising in mias-  
matic districts and those of a  
bilious character Mercurial purges  
will be found most useful.  
Large and repeated doses of Calo-  
mel, combined with Opium will  
be found to answer extremely well.  
We know one valuable property





of Calomel when applied to inflamed surfaces, as it would be in this. It does not increase the inflammation or excite irritation. It may also be given in conjunction with Rheubarb, in conjunction with the above treatment Mucilaginous injections will be found necessary; they may be composed of Flaxseed tea, Gum Arabic or Starch, after Evacuations and before if the pain be distressing, opiates may be given, when exhibited during the evening we should reap most benefit from them, as sleep taken during night appears to be more refreshing than that taken during the day--

The opiate practice should never seriously interfere with



the operation of the Purgative; We generally continue the purging until the stools become natural, and for this purpose we must alternate the different purgatives. Should the stools still continue Dysenteric, and symptoms of approaching Gangrene appear, the Spt. of Turpentine with Castor oil appears to be the best remedy. The turpentine appears to increase the purgative operation of the Oil, and the salutary effects ~~of the results~~ from its use in Gastric and other affections of the alimentary canal about to terminate in Gangrene, may be expected from its use in Dysentery, especially when accompanied with much pain and Tensions of the abdomen: We should



also wring cloths out of it, and  
apply them to the belly.

Like most other diseases irritat-  
ing of the nature of our autumnal  
fevers, this disease is accompanied  
with a stricture of the extreme vessels,  
and a consequent suppression of  
Respiration. It therefore, becomes  
an object of primary importance to  
this function to its natural and  
healthy state, and for this purpose  
the Antimonial preparations have  
been highly spoken of: but much  
more may be expected from a combina-  
-tion of opium, Spécacuanha and Cal-  
-omel in small doses. This will be  
found to answer better than every  
powder. For Calomel in small  
doses is found to be very beneficial



in complaints of the bowels, and  
Spicacuanaka to be serviceable where  
there is much sickness. In conjunction  
with this where there is much  
tension of the abdomen we may  
employ fomentations. The reason both  
will be found a remedy of much  
importance.

Blisters are indispensable  
in this stage of the disease, a large  
one should be applied to the ab-  
domen so as to cover the lower  
part of the belly, it will subdue  
inflammation and loosen constriction  
and morbid irritation of the part.  
But in some cases of this obstinate  
and fatal complaint notwithstanding  
the use of all the above remedies in  
the early and acute stages, it contin-





eyes unbroken.

The mouth, tongue and throat covered with aptha, the pulse feeble and small, the strength sunk, the body more or less emaciated and in addition to this perhaps great anxiety at the Praecordia with extreme difficulty of breathing, the stool frequent and small consisting of sanies or purulent matter mixed with blood the Tormenta and Tenesmus distressing. In this advanced stage of the disease the evacuation of the offending matter from the bowels is our chief object, and for this purpose the mildest medicines must be employed: we must endeavour to sheathe the bowels by bland mucilaginous and oily drinks to



allay pain and irritation.

For Catarrh:

= ing the first indication we may em=  
ploy either oil with the Spt. or =  
= berine or any of the mild oils  
'combined with the Tinct. or Rheubarb.  
Also the Gum Arabic or any of the  
Mucilaginous diluents holding the  
precipitated salts in solution, and given  
in conjunction are well adapted  
to this stage of this complaint.

Should the ~~hotness~~ and ~~congestion~~  
be disturbing the vicarious mixture  
will be found highly serviceable.  
We may also employ the Precipitated  
salts, and in conjunction with  
the above mild injections of Flaxseed  
Tea or Mutton Suet, but the best  
remedy of all for allaying the ~~Force~~



mena and Tenesmus is an injection  
of melted butter. This should be  
free from salt and rancidity, and  
administered in the quantity of half  
a pint or three Gills. When there  
is much pain and Tenesmus, and  
especially when the Glysters cannot  
be long retained, it becomes neces-  
sary to combine Laudanum with  
them or put an Opium pill or  
two up the rectum. The intestines  
will make effort to expell them,  
and some benefit will generally  
result from the alleviation of the  
torment and Tenesmus.

In all the  
bowel affections and particularly in  
Dysentery great attention should  
be paid to diet. It should con:



list of light nutritious and wholesome  
food principally of a fluid and mu-  
-cilaginous nature. Barley water  
Loaf-sugar and water. Decoction  
of Lin and such like things are  
proper in the commencement of the  
disease. In the more advanced  
stages of the disease the articles of  
food should consist of the more  
nourishing *Saxanaca* as the arrow-  
root, *cago*, *apioca* and *Manado* are  
all proper. guarding carefully against  
excesses or indulgence in any indiges-  
tible food: on the contrary selecting  
such as are light and digestible.

In some cases Dysentery as-  
-umes the Chronic form and the pa-  
-tient is kept low by the irritation of  
-fumes or by frequent returns of





Diarrhoea: Salivation may here be  
resorted to with marked advantage.  
The Calomel may be given in small  
doses together with frictions of Mer-  
curial Ointment.

The Blisters on the  
Abdomen should be kept running  
and a flannel roller applied round  
the belly of the patient. We may  
here give a grain or two of Ipecacuan.  
Combined with Opium with marked  
advantage; also the Decoction of Log-  
wood, and to this we may add  
the Infusion of Colombo; and if  
the patient's strength permits, rid-  
ing on horse back.

If the Food be  
carried off undigested, Constituting  
a Lientery of the bowels, which is ow:



=ing to an enfeebled state of them;  
the Astringent Substances, such as  
the Log-wood, Catechu, and the Sew-  
berry-root may be administered.

To prevent a relapse the  
patient should be warmly clad;  
with flannel next the skin: use  
gentle exercise in the open air: observe  
regular hours in eating and sleep:  
=ing, and every other means of res=  
toring the healthy functions of the body.

I must now close this brief  
and imperfect essay, but previously  
to concluding, I must express my  
warmest thanks in return for  
the instruction and knowledge  
I have gained in attendance on your  
highly instructing and interesting  
Lectures: and that you may individ=



ually by your useful labours continue  
to uphold the reputation of the first  
Medical School in the New World  
and that your lives may be long  
and prosperous, is the sincere  
wish of one who is now constrained  
to claim a share of that indul-  
gence and liberality, by which you  
have been heretofore Characterized.

